BEST FITNESS
TRACKER BANDS
OF 2014

VS.

Basis Carbon Steel Edition: Fitness Tracker Review

By Rachael Rettner, Senior Writer

Date: 10 February 2014 Time: 12:22 PM ET

The Basis Carbon Steel Edition is the latest version of the Basis fitness tracker, and features several design changes from the original Basis fitness tracker BUY Basis Carbon Steel»>
CREDIT: Basis

The Basis Carbon Steel Edition is the latest version of the Basis fitness tracker, and features several design changes from the original Basis fitness tracker, the Basis B1. It sells for $199, whereas the price of the original version dropped to $179. But is newer necessarily better? I tested the Carbon Steel to find out.

Design/Comfort: □□□□□

One of the main differences between the original Basis and the new edition is visual: The new band definitely has a sleeker look. It has a silicone strap, which is more flexible, and feels softer, than the rubber/plastic strap on the original

version. And the strap connections — where the strap attaches to the tracker face — are now a shiny chrome color.

The band is aesthetically pleasing, and the new strap feels more comfortable against the skin. However, when I first strapped on the tracker, the chrome connections (which felt a little heavy) started to dig into my skin, and left marks after a little while. Ouch. I thought I had chosen the right size setting, but I had to wear the tracker a bit lose to prevent this problem.

The tracker face itself is still the same size as the original, which is quite large. This makes for an easy-to-see watch, but also makes it hard to pull a sweater on or off while wearing it.

User-Friendliness: 000000

The Carbon Steel Edition is just as user-friendly as the original Basis B1. The tracker can automatically detect when you are running, walking or cycling. I thought this was neat — after a short walk, the tracker screen will show you how long you've been walking, and how many calories you burned during the walk. This timer stops if you stop walking, and picks up again when you resume, keeping track of your total walking time.

Like the original, the Carbon Steel Edition doesn't have a sleep mode, and automatically detects when you're sleeping. This feature is appealing — it's one less thing to remember. However, I was disappointed that, despite touting a new sleep-analysis feature, the Carbon Steel Edition still made a few mistakes about when I was sleeping. Once, it said I was sleeping for 30 minutes, when I was actually watching a movie. And another time, it said I was asleep at work, when I was actually sifting through my inbox. To me, these occasional errors are a downside to not having a way to tell the device when to enter sleep mode.

Still, the Carbon Steel has all the user-friendly features of the original, including a Web app, where the user's data is presented in fun and interesting ways. (See our Basis B1 Review for a recap of these features.) In the Data section of the Web app, users can now view more details about their sleep as part of the new sleep-analysis feature. An easy-to-understand chart shows time spent in light sleep, deep sleep and REM sleep, as well as the number of times you tossed/turned, and when your sleep was interrupted. You're also given a sleep score, which is meant to reflect how well you slept on a scale of 0 to 100.

Value of Information: ☐☐☐☐☐

I applaud Basis for continuing to provide explanations for some of the metrics it tracks, which give these metrics a value beyond just a number. For example, in addition to tracking the stages of sleep, Basis provides an explanation for what each phase of sleep means, why it's important and how much time a person typically spends in each stage. Basis also tells you how much daily activity is recommended by the Surgeon General, and how much sleep you should aim for.

But I found myself wondering about the value of tracking my sleep stages. It turns out, sleep researchers are skeptical of the ability of fitness trackers to accurately track sleep stages. That's because most fitness trackers use an accelerometer (sensors that detect motion) to track sleep, but sleep stages are primarily defined by brain activity. Basis says it has tested its fitness tracker in sleep labs, and that it uses both heart rate and motion to track sleep stages. (Unlike many other trackers on the market, the Basis includes a heart-rate monitor.) Still, my sleep score didn't always reflect how I felt: One night, my sleep score was particularly high, but I felt tired the next day.

Enjoyment/Inspiration: ☐☐☐☐☐

Overall, the Basis is enjoyable and motivating to use. A big part of the motivation to keep using the tracker comes from the inclusion of a point system, in which users get points by completing "habits" (such as taking a walk every morning). As you collect more points, you can "unlock" more habits.

Conclusion: 16 out of 20 stars

The Carbon Steel Edition is very similar to the original Basis. If you're a fan of the new, sleeker look, and softer strap, the Carbon Steel may be worth the extra $20 over the original.

Compared to some other trackers, the pros of the Basis include the screen/watch on the device itself, the inclusion of a heart-rate monitor and a feature called Habits that is intended to motivate you to be healthier by accomplishing set goals.

The cons of the Basis include its large size, a lack of a way to monitor calorie intake and occasional errors with the time you are asleep.

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Basis B1: Fitness Tracker Review

By Rachael Rettner, Senior Writer

Date: 09 January 2014 Time: 03:36 PM ET

The Basis B1 is an activity tracker that's marketed as a device that helps busy people fit exercise into their everyday lives. BUY Basis B1»>
CREDIT: Basis

The Basis B1 is an activity tracker that's marketed as a device that helps busy people fit exercise into their everyday lives. A distinguishing feature of the Basis is that it includes a heart-rate monitor. The device also tracks more standard measures like steps taken, calories burned, distance walked and sleep. With a price tag ranging from $169.99 to $199.99, the Basis is one of the more expensive activity trackers on the market, with a higher price than the Fitbit Force ($129.95) and the Withings Pulse ($99.95, which also includes a heart monitor). Is the Basis worth the extra bucks? I tested the device for a week to find out. (Our review of the Basis B1 Carbon Steel Edition is coming soon).

Design/Comfort:

The Basis looks like a digital wristwatch. It has an adjustable strap, which allows

for a snug fit, and a screen, which displays the time and activity measures, including steps taken, calories burned, distance walked, time spent walking and heart rate. (Pressing one of the front buttons will make the screen cycle through these measures). A neat feature of the device is that the screen's backlight will shine when you twist your wrist to look down at the screen — meaning this light shines just when you need it to.

Unfortunately, the Basis is a bit bulky, and there is only one size. There were times when I had to remove the device in order to take off a coat or long-sleeved shirt because the device got stuck in the sleeve. My guess is that the device needs to be a certain size in order to accommodate its heart-rate monitor and other sensors (including those that detect skin temperature and perspiration). Still, the device looked big on me, and being a petite female, I couldn't help but think that the device would be better suited (and perhaps more appealing) for an average-size male.

User-Friendliness: 🔲🔲🔲🔲

The Basis is pretty user-friendly. The screen on the device itself allows users to see how they're doing at any given moment, so they don't have to upload or sync their data with a smartphone and open an app.

To view more details about your data, you can either download the Basis software and use the provided USB cable to sync the device to your computer, or sync the device wirelessly to your smartphone, and view your data on the Android or iOS app.

The Basis tries to get you to be healthier by having you complete goals it calls "habits," which you select when you log in to your account. For example, if you chose the habit "Don't be a sitter," you needto get up at least once each hour between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. for a few days to complete the goal. The basis web app is easy to navigate, placing information into three sections: Habits, Insights and Data.

In the Insights and Data sections, your metrics are presented in fun and interesting ways. For example, in the Insights section, a chart shows your activity throughout the day, with bars representing your activity level. You can also view your heart rate, skin temperature and perspiration data on the same chart, allowing you to see the points in time when these measures changed, and how the changes correlate with your activity.

The Data section shows patterns of activity: It divides a day into blocks of time, and the blocks are shaded different colors, with darker shades representing more intense activity (for example, higher heart rate). Over time, patterns may start to emerge in your data (periods of darker or lighter colors), which you can see at a glance.

You don't have to put the Basis in sleep mode; it detects when you're sleeping automatically. This could be seen as an advantage over other trackers, which have to be told to go into sleep mode, but it did sometimes lead to problems. One morning, the device thought I was sleeping when I was at work (though I was wide awake at my desk, reading emails).

I also had some problems syncing the Basis with my computer, and was not always able to sync on the first try. And when the device did sync, I had to wait a little while before the new data would show up in my Basis account.

Value of information: 〰〰〰〰〰

Through its Habits feature, the Basis provides added value beyond some of the information it tracks. For instance, the section that describes physical-activity habits says "According to the Surgeon General, we need to take at least 10,000 steps a day (the equivalent of 30 minutes of activity)." And in the section that describes sleep habits, it says that the recommended daily amount of sleep is 7.5 to 9 hours.

But the Basis does not explain all of the measures it tracks. Despite including a fancy heart monitor, there is no explanation of what your heart rate might tell you about your health. [New Heart Rate Trackers: Is Knowing Your Pulse Useful?] This may have been purposeful, as the Basis is not intended to diagnose medical problems that might be related to heart rate. But I thought that the company could have included some general information about heart rate, such as why it might be useful to know your heart rate during exercise, or how the heart rate fluctuates naturally during the day in response to stress and activity.

There is also no explanation about skin temperature or perspiration data. For me, these two measures changed very little during the day, which made me wonder whether it was useful to collect this data.

The Basis also does not have a way to track how many calories you've eaten during the day.

Enjoyment/Inspiration: □□□□□

Despite some flaws, I did really enjoy using the Basis. I've tested quite a few different activity trackers in recent months, and I can honesty say that the Basis is the only one I wanted to keep using. The Basis is motivating: It provides you with points when you complete a habit, and you cannot start (or "unlock") a new habit unless you have enough points for that habit. The "Don't be a sitter" habit really did get me out of my chair at the office, and made me aware of just how long I usually go without moving. I wanted to keep on using the device so I could unlock more habits.

Conclusion: 16 out of 20 stars

The pros of the Basis include the screen interface on the device itself, the inclusion of a heart-rate monitor and a feature called Habits that is intended to motivate you to be healthier by accomplishing set goals.

The cons of the Basis include its large size, a lack of a way to monitor calorie intake and occasional glitches when syncing.

BUY the Basis B1 »>

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Fitbit Force: Fitness Tracker Review

By Miriam Kramer, Staff Writer

Date: 26 February 2013 Time: 03:30 PM ET

The Fitbit Force
CREDIT: Fitbit

Editor's Note: On Feb. 20, 2014, the Fitbit Force was recalled by the company *because of users' reports of skin irritation. Fitbit will no longer sell the Force, and has set up a* website *for consumers seeking refunds and returns.*

The Fitbit Force is a fitness tracker, and over the course of a week the device did a good job measuring my exercise, diet and sleep. The small, easy-to-access display kept me constantly abreast of my activity levels and calories burned, and although the Force wasn't perfect, it inspired me to keep moving. Here's a breakdown of how it worked:

Design/Comfort:

The biggest problem I had with the Fitbit Force was how long it took to put the device on my wrist. The rubber band is pretty inflexible, and therefore difficult to attach. Eventually, as the band got a little more broken in, putting it on became a

bit easier.

Once I had the Force on my wrist, however, it was comfortable to wear for long periods of time. The Force is lightweight, and made of a soft rubber like its predecessor, the Fitbit Flex. The band also comes in a few different colors.

I loved that the Force band's bright display doubles as a watch. Although the Force syncs with a smartphone via Bluetooth, so you can check your stats on your phone, the display let me check my stats on the band itself, without opening the app on my phone. [Top Fitness Gadgets for 2013]

Using a small button on the side of the Force, I could click through the number of steps I'd taken, calories burned, flights of stairs climbed, active minutes per day and miles walked.

User-Friendliness: 　　　

The free app you can download with the Fitbit Force is very intuitive, and easy to use. As soon as you open the app, it syncs with your device and displays how far you've progressed in your goals for the day. For instance, if I'd walked only 5,000 steps out of my goal of 10,000, the bar measuring those steps would appear in yellow instead of green.

The Force app also gave me some positive reinforcement, sending push notifications that encouraged me to keep going if I was within striking distance of my goals for the day. The band 's vibration feature alerted me when I reached my step goal for the day. All in all, it's a nice system that kept me checking in on my progress throughout the day.

The watch feature was particularly useful, because whenever I glanced at the Force to see the time, I usually ended up scrolling through the tracking metrics, just to see if I was on target for my day. If I wasn't, the lack of progress sometimes convinced me to take a walk around the block or do something else active to raise my scores.

Value of Information: 　　　

The amount of information the Force could collect impressed me. For example, unlike other trackers, the Force can measure how many flights of stairs you climb each day. However, the stair tracker wasn't always accurate (it counted a few more flights of stairs than I actually climbed most days).

The Force gave me default goals to reach every day, after I put my weight, height, age and other information into the app, but I'm not sure exactly how it decided on them.

And like other trackers, the Force suffers from the limits of measuring activity with an accelerometer. The tracker had trouble telling how far I'd walked on an elliptical machine, and it registered an hour of rather-intense yoga as zero "active minutes." I logged my own workouts to be sure that I got credit where credit was due.

It's easy to turn on the sleep-tracking feature; you just hold down the button on the side until a timer starts. It seemed to track my sleep accurately enough — it knew when I was awake versus when I was asleep — but I'm pretty sure the tracker counted it as "restless sleep" whenever I moved, even if I wasn't actually that restless.

Enjoyment and Inspiration: □□□□□

I loved having the Force on my wrist for a week. It was fun to see how many steps I took each day and how many calories I burned. It was great to have all of the information available both at the click of a button on my wrist, or through my phone.

The graphs showing the peaks and valleys of my activity each day were also inspirational. I got to see how much my commute contributes to the number of steps and active minutes I accumulate through the course of the day, and it was interesting to see how my progress changed when I travelled, or didn't hit the gym.

I could also input the food I ate to track calories taken in, versus calories burned. At the end of the week, FitBit sent me an email summary of everything I'd done the week before, giving a nice perspective on how much I'd worked those seven days.

All in all, the device wasn't intrusive, and it did make a bit of a difference on days when I felt particularly lazy. It provided just the kick I needed to get out the door, and walk that extra distance to reach my goal.

Conclusion: 15 out of 20 stars

Overall, I enjoyed my week with the Fitbit Force. It was a nice little device, with an easy-to-use app that kept track of my activity pretty accurately. I liked that all

of my stats were right there on my wrist and easy to access even without my phone.

I didn't like that the Force failed to reliably track activity other than walking, and that putting the band on my wrist presented a real hassle.

Follow Miriam Kramer @mirikramer and Google+.

Garmin Vivofit: Fitness Tracker Review

By Denise Chow, Staff Writer

Date: 01 April 2014 Time: 06:32 PM ET

The Garmin Vivofit. BUY Garmin Vivofit»>
CREDIT: Garmin

The Garmin Vivofit is a fitness tracker marketed as a device that can help you turn your daily exercise into healthy, lifelong habits. In addition to logging the standard fitness-tracker data — including steps taken, calories burned, distance walked and sleep — the Vivofit assigns you a personalized fitness goal, which adjusts itself daily, as the device learns your habits and milestones.

The fitness band, which can be bundled with a heart-rate monitor, is available in five colors: black, blue, purple, teal and slate. The Vivofit ranges in price from $129.99 to $149.95, making it more affordable than the Basis B1 tracker, which ranges in price from $169.99 to $199.99, but more expensive than the Withings Pulse, which retails for $99.95 (and includes a heart monitor). The Vivofit can also be bundled with a heart rate monitor for a price ranging from $169.99 to $239.00.

I wore the Garmin Vivofit for two weeks to see how much it motivated me to keep

moving. [Video: How to Get the Most from Wearable Devices]

Design/Comfort: □□□□□

The Vivofit has a flexible rubber band that was fairly easy for me to clip into place around my wrist. The band seems to run large, though, and I needed to adjust it to the smallest size. I imagine people — particularly women — with small wrists will find the Vivofit needs better sizing options, because the device feels most comfortable when it is snug and not moving around too much.

I loved the Vivofit's simple design — it has a display screen, which not all fitness trackers have — and only one button to press to scroll through the various measures, displaying my fitness goal, the time of day, steps taken, distance walked, heart rate and calories burned. Pressing the button repeatedly cycles through these measures, and small icons at the bottom of the screen make it easy to tell which stats were being displayed at any given time.

Another advantage of the Vivofit is that its display is always on, so my step count remained visible throughout the day, making it easy to monitor my progress without needing to press any buttons or wake up the device. I also sometimes set the screen to display the time, which let me use the Vivofit as a watch.

Occasionally, I was concerned about the security of the Vivofit's clasp. I wore the device while traveling, and once while I was grabbing something out of my large, carry-on bag, the Vivofit's strap caught on something and came undone. While this only happened once, it did make me worry about the possibility of losing the device if something unexpectedly pulls the double-notched clasp free.

User-Friendliness: □□□□□

I started wearing the Vivofit with its default settings, and then started playing around with the settings only after the device had logged a few days of activity. One of the features that sets the Vivofit apart from other fitness trackers is its ability to assign personalized daily goals. According to Garmin, the Vivofit learns your activity level and adjusts your daily goals based on how well you meet the milestones. In other words, if you repeatedly surpass your goals, the Vivofit will automatically assign a higher value the next day. But if you go a few days without hitting your targets, the device will scale things back to a more achievable — but still challenging — level.

Company officials say the aim of this feature is to encourage healthier habits by

helping people gradually strive toward becoming more active. The "auto goal" setting is enabled by default, but anyone who wants to be more hands-on with their fitness can manually customize their goals by syncing the Vivofit to a computer or mobile device.

One of the Vivofit's main selling points is its impressive one-year battery life. This means that, unlike many other fitness trackers currently on the market, the Vivofit does not need to be charged every few days. The device can also be worn in the shower and while swimming, which is a feature I really appreciated, because it meant I could go days without having to take the Vivofit off and interrupt its data collection.

Value of Information:

Like many other fitness trackers, the Vivofit logs steps taken, calories burned, distance walked and sleep. I walk to and from work every day, so I found I almost always surpassed the goals assigned to me by the device. It was interesting, however, to see the incremental adjustments the device made in setting my targets for each day, and when I synced the device to its app — called Garmin Connect — I could see my progression and monitor how well the Vivofit motivated me to stay active.

The device also features a "move bar," which consists of five red segments that gradually appear across the top of the screen if you have been inactive for a long period of time. The first and longest segment will appear after one hour of inactivity, and then a new segment will show up for every 15 additional minutes of inactivity. The move bar is designed to inspire (or shame) people to get up and move after long periods of sitting, for instance, but I also found it helped me be conscious of the times of day when I'm the least active.

At times, though, I wished the device vibrated whenever a new segment appeared, because I didn't always notice the bar had progressed as much as it had.

The Vivofit also tracks sleep habits, which is something I've been curious (and nervous) to learn more about. When I set up my Garmin Connect account, I entered the times when I typically go to bed and wake up. This helps the device establish a baseline, but to actually track sleep, users need to hold the button down until the Vivofit displays "SLEEP" on the screen. I loved being able to track my sleep, but having to manually set the device to sleep mode meant there were

many times when I forgot.

Syncing the Vivofit to my computer and phone was fairly straightforward — the device connects via Bluetooth to mobile devices, or can connect to computers through a wireless device that plugs into an empty USB port. First-time users will have to create a Garmin Connect account to get started, but the app is compatible with other Garmin fitness products, including several of the company's GPS watches.

Syncing the Vivofit involves holding down the button until "SYNC" appears on the screen. A few times, however, the device failed to register goals I had manually entered, and other times, it took several tries before my information transferred properly.

Enjoyment/Inspiration: 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

Overall, I enjoyed wearing the Vivofit, and it was interesting to put numbers to my day-to-day physical activity, such as how many steps I took or how many calories I burned. People who are new to fitness tracking will likely find the Vivofit's "auto goal" setting helpful in determining a baseline. Each time my goal was automatically adjusted higher, I felt motivated to do more to reach that target.

Once I synced my information to the Garmin Connect app, I could see more detailed graphs of my daily activity, such as a bar chart that displays steps taken against the time of day. The app also showed me comparisons of my activity by week, month and year.

One of the best things about the Vivofit is that it was easy to forget I was actually wearing a fitness tracker. The device rarely intruded on my day-to-day activities, and not needing to charge its battery every few days meant I didn't have to add more clutter to my tangled web of laptop, phone and tablet cords.

Conclusion: 14 out of 20 stars

The Garmin Vivofit was comfortable and fun to wear, and it's a device that makes it extremely convenient to start living a more active lifestyle. The Vivofit also has a sleek design, and comes in a variety of fun colors.

I experienced some issues when syncing the device to my computer and phone, and having to manually put the device in sleep mode makes it easy to forget about that feature.

The Vivofit's one-year battery life definitely sets it apart from other fitness trackers, and having an electronic device in my life that doesn't need charging felt extremely liberating.

BUY Garmin Vivofit»>

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Fitbit One: Fitness Tracker Review

By Rachael Rettner, Senior Writer

Date: 28 February 2014 Time: 06:04 PM ET

The Fitbit One BUY the Fitbit One»>
CREDIT: Top Ten Reviews

The One is a fitness tracker from Fitbit, a company known for its wearable devices. At $99.95, the One is in the mid-level price range for fitness trackers, more expensive than the Fitbit Zip ($59.95), but cheaper than the Nike FuelBand ($149), and the same price as the Withings Pulse. The One tracks all the basic metrics, including sleep, steps taken, distance walked and calories burned, and also tracks the number of floors you climb. I tested the One for a week, and here's what I found:

Design/Comfort: 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

The Fitbit One is a small, lightweight tracker, which makes it easy to wear the device and forget you have it on. The One is small enough to fit into your pocket, or you can place it in the provided clip and wear it on your belt/waistband as you would a pedometer. If you're like me and prefer "pedometer-style" trackers to

ones you have to wear on your wrist all the time (as you have to do with the Jawbone UP and Nike FuelBand), the One may make a good choice you.

To track your sleep, you place the One into the provided sleep wristband. Although the band is quite large, it is comfortable, and I didn't notice it while I slept. The band is made of soft cloth and easily wraps around your wrist. A strip of Velcro on the band means it can fit any sized wrist. If you set an alarm (which you can do through the Fitbit mobile app), the device quietly vibrates to wake you up in the morning.

User-Friendliness: 󰀀󰀀󰀀󰀀󰀀

The device and accompanying mobile and Web app are very user friendly. You push a single button on the device itself to cycle through a display of your steps taken, floors climbed, distance walked and calories burned, as well as the time of day. You'll also see an image of a flower that grows the more active you are, so you can monitor your progress at a glance.

You can view more-detailed information about your activity with the Fitbit app, or online through your Fitbit account. The device syncs wirelessly with your mobile phone through Bluetooth, or with your computer through the provided wireless dongle (a small piece of hardware you plug into a USB port to allow the device to sync). Fitbit is one of the few trackers that provides a wireless dongle, which may be especially useful for people who do not have a smartphone.

In your Fitbit account, you'll see all of your data nicely laid out on the dashboard, with a square for each metric (such as steps, calories, etc.). Clicking on each square will show you more information about that metric, such as how many steps you took on each day of that week. The account also has a "log" feature, which keeps a record of your activity and can show you your data from any specific day in the past. You can also enter a record of the food you eat through the app or through your account.

The One's app displays your sleep data as a graph, with red lines indicating when you woke up and turquois lines indicating when you were "restless," or moving during your sleep. However, if you toss and turn a lot, the graph ends up with many red and turquois lines, which I found difficult to decipher. For example, one night I was "restless" 24 times, so the app showed 24 turquois lines. Clicking on each of these tiny lines will tell you when you were awake or restless, but this is difficult because the graph is quite small.

Value of Information: 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

Fitbit has default "goals" so you don't have to set them yourself if you're not sure what your goal should be. The default goals are: 10,000 steps a day, 5 miles a day, 30 "active" minutes and 10 floors climbed. However, I could not find an explanation for why Fitbit picked these goals in particular — is this how active you need to be to be healthy? The app didn't make that clear. (In contrast, the Withings Pulse sets a goal of 150 minutes of walking or other activity a week, which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend as a minimum for exercise).

The One also calculates your "sleep efficiency," an indicator of how well you slept, but does not provide advice for what you need to do to rest better. Sleep researchers also say that fitness trackers tend to overestimate how long you sleep , because the devices are more likely to register that you are asleep when you're actually awake.

I also noticed that the One kept tracking my steps in sleep mode. I woke up one morning to see I had taken 25 steps at night. No, I wasn't sleepwalking; the device must have registered my movement (tossing and turning) as steps. But why track steps when the device is in sleep mode? These 25 steps added to my total for the day, but they were not actual steps.

In addition, the device can't track swimming or biking activities, so people who frequently engage in this kind of exercise may want to look for another tracker. However, you can keep your own record of biking, swimming or other activities in the log section of your Fitbit account.

Enjoyment/Inspiration: 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

The Fitbit One includes a number of features that motivate you to be more active.

Fibit encourages you to connect with friends who also have Fitbit accounts. In the app or your account, you can see how your progress compares to that of your friends. If you have a competitive streak, seeing how you rank among your friends may give you the motivation you need to get in that extra daily walk.

You'll also earn "badges" that appear on your account when you reach fitness milestones, such as a badge for reaching 50 "lifetime" miles, or a badge for walking more steps in a day than you ever have (my best was 15,000 steps), which

provides incentives to keep using the device.

And the fitness tracker itself flashes encouraging messages on the screen, such as "You Rock!" and "I'm Ready!"

Conclusion: 14 out of 20 stars

Pros: The pros of the One include its small size, the way it lets you connect with friends, the alarm that you can set, the inclusion of a wireless dongle to synch with your computer, and a lower price than some other fitness trackers.

Cons: The cons of the One include a sleep graph that's somewhat difficult to navigate, the tendency of the device to count "steps" while you're asleep and the lack of certain features found in higher-priced fitness trackers, such as the ability to track cycling.
BUY the Fitbit One »>

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Fitbit Flex: Fitness Tracker Review

By Clara Moskowitz, Senior Writer

Date: 02 October 2013 Time: 12:57 AM ET

BUY the Fitbit Flex »>
CREDIT: Laptopmag.com

The Fitbit Flex is an activity tracker aimed at measuring your exercise, diet and sleep. The device was my constant companion for about a week, and by the end of it, I felt informed about my activity levels, and was motivated to get moving. While the Fitbit has some frustrating features, it's also simple, comfortable and useful, and I found myself surprisingly addicted to checking my progress. Here's a breakdown of how it did in several areas:

Design/Comfort:

The wristband and I got off on the wrong foot when I tried and failed for a few minutes to fasten it around my wrist. When I read the instructions, however, I was able to snap it into place, and after a week of use, the band became a bit more flexible, and was easy to take off and put back on again.

The Fitbit Flex is lightweight and very comfortable — I found it less intrusive and

unwieldy than some heavier fitness wristbands. I hardly took it off for a week, and soon got used to its presence.

The band is flat, about the width of a watchband, and made of a soft, rubbery material in a single color (you can choose from a few options). While it's not quite fashionable, it also isn't ugly and doesn't stand out.

The Fitbit syncs with your phone via Bluetooth, so there's no need to plug it in to your phone to check your stats — a fact that made me more likely to open the app and check up on myself throughout the day. [Top Fitness Gadgets for 2013]

User-Friendliness: 🌟🌟🌟🌟

In general, the Fitbit Flex is easy to use, and the first time I plugged it in and got the app up and running, I was able to navigate it easily. The app display is simple and clean, and communicated most of what I wanted to see at first glance.

Some features, though, were unnecessarily hard to reach. For example, to tell the Fitbit I was going to bed so it could start tracking my sleep, I had to open the app, tap on the "More" tab, tap on the third option down, "Sleep," then tap on a "+" sign next to a bar labeled "Logged Sleep," before I was presented with the option, "Begin Sleep Now."

This should have been possible with a lot fewer taps, ideally directly from the home page. It was certainly much more laborious than telling the Jawbone Up you're going to sleep, for example, which can be accomplished with a simple tap on the device, without the need to open the app at all.

Value of Information: 🌟🌟🌟🌟

The Fitbit captures a good amount of data for you, and can track even more if you take the time to enter data about your meals, your weight and other such information, such as the amount of water you drink every day.

If you input only your basic stats (height, weight, age, etc.) to begin, and strap on the device, it'll tell you your daily number of steps taken, distance traveled on foot, minutes spent being very active and calories burned. If you tip it off every night that you're heading to bed, and tell it when you're awake again in the morning, it will use motion to track how much time you're actually asleep while in bed, and how restless you were.

All this info is fun to see, and the Fitbit presents everything in terms of a

percentage toward a goal. You can set a goal yourself, or use its default goal, which for me was 10,000 steps, 5 miles, 30 very active minutes and 2,184 calories burned.

Not all the data were well-explained, though. For example, there was no explanation for how it arrived at my default calorie goal. On some days, I exceeded Fitbit's goal for steps taken and distance walked, as well as very active minutes, but I was still well away from meeting the goal for calories burned. Why? I would have liked some tips on what I could do to meet the calorie-burning goal, or an explanation for why the calorie goal didn't correlate with the activity goals.

I had mixed success with the sleep tracker, but generally felt that it wasn't especially accurate. There were nights I knew I awoke several times, but the Fitbit told me I'd slept straight through — natural limitations of tracking sleep based on only wrist motion.

Enjoyment/Inspiration: 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

The Fitbit was a fun companion. Overall, its ease of use and comfort made me enjoy wearing it, and I found the data it offered informative and motivating.

One simple feature made a big difference in how I felt about wearing the device. On the wristband, a small plastic strip will show your progress toward your daily steps goal via dots representing 20 percent increments. I found myself frequently tapping, just to see the pretty glowing dots appear and get an update. And that simple action in turn made me more motivated to increase my activity, without even needing to open the app. This gave the Fitbit the edge over devices that only give you feedback once you open their apps.

I did find the Fitbit influenced my behavior, occasionally giving me the extra push I needed to take a walk around the block, to up my steps tally. Ultimately, it probably didn't change my health habits too much, and it definitely didn't transform me into the fitness fiend I sometimes wish I were, but that's not surprising. No device can get you off your butt when you don't want to.

Conclusion: 14 out of 20 stars

The pros of the Fitbit Flex compared with other fitness trackers include that it is lighter and flatter than others, it syncs wirelessly with your phone, and your daily progress is visible on the band itself.

The cons include the unusually high number of taps it takes to access certain

features, as well as a lack of explanation and interpretation for some of the data it provides.

BUY the Fitbit Flex »>

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Withings Pulse: Fitness Tracker Review

By Rachael Rettner, Senior Writer

Date: 02 October 2013 Time: 12:48 AM ET

BUY the Withings Pulse »>

The Withings Pulse is an activity tracker marketed to just about anyone interested in learning more about their daily habits. Released earlier this year, the Pulse tracks total steps, total distance traveled, elevation, calories burned, and your total sleep time and sleep quality. Unlike many other activity trackers, the device also lets you check your heart rate (hence the name Pulse) and track changes over time. As someone who's new to the world of activity tracking, I decided to test out the device for a week to see how easy it is for a layperson to use, and whether knowing such information can really inspire you to try to be healthier. [9 Odd Ways Your Tech Devices May Injure You]

Design/Comfort: 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

You can wear the Pulse in several ways: put it in your pocket, attach it to your belt/waistband with a clip (just as you would wear a pedometer) or place it in a wristband to wear like a watch.

I found the belt clip to be the most comfortable way to wear the Pulse. I clipped it on in the morning, and soon forgot that it was there. To me, the "pedometer style" of the Pulse gives the device an advantage over other fitness trackers — like the Up and Fuelband — which must be worn on the wrist. If you have small wrists like I do, or are generally bothered by bracelets, the Pulse might be attractive to you.

The product refers to the wristband as the "sleep wristband," so presumably, it is intended to strap on when you go to bed. I found the wristband to be comfortable — it's made of cloth— and it did not bother me while I slept. I could have also worn the wristband at other times of the day, but with a strap that's 1.5 inches wide, it's hardly inconspicuous.

User-Friendliness: 🟦🟦🟦🟦🟦

Overall, the Pulse is very user-friendly. Despite never having used a fitness tracker before, I found the setup to be a breeze. The device comes with a short booklet that has simple instructions with many pictures, so there's no wading through a boring user manual.

It was also fairly intuitive. Each push of the button on the top of the device changes the screen to display a different metric (sleep, calories and steps). And the device app shows a large picture of a butterfly that depicts your progress — as you add more measurements, its wings fill up with color.

However, I also had questions that the instructions didn't answer. I found myself wondering: For how long do I charge the device? (The device turns on right away after charging, and although it showed a full battery within minutes, I unplugged it too soon and had to recharge it when the battery level quickly dropped back down.) Can I wear it in the shower? (No, I found after Googling.) What exactly does it mean by "elevation"? (It doesn't mean your current elevation, but rather how many feet you climb.)

I later tested out the Jawbone Up and Nike+ Fuelband, which have either animations or videos to show you how to use the device. I think those devices benefit from including such visual instructions for newbies.

Value of Information: 🟦🟦🟦🟦🟦

The Pulse tells you more than just how far you've walked; it also tells you how much physical activity is considered "good." The device prompts you to keep

walking until you've reached the goal of 150 minutes of activity per week, which is the amount recommended by the World Health Organization. Such information may be useful for fitness novices who aren't sure what their weekly goal should be.

The device also tracks how many hours you sleep, and the amount of time spent in light and deep sleep. The app tells you how much sleep adults generally need (7 to 9 hours a night) and provides tips to get a better night's sleep.

However, I found myself wondering how accurate the device was at tracking sleep during the night. The Pulse tracks sleep cycles by using an accelerometer to measure movement during sleep, similar to the way an actigraph, a device used in home-sleep studies, does.

However, a 2012 study found that the Fitbit tracker, which also uses an accelerometer to track sleep, was less accurate than a sleep lab test (polysomnography) at determining the total hours slept and the quality of sleep. Generally, activity trackers are more likely to say you are asleep when you are really awake, which means they can overestimate how long you sleep. The Pulse seemed to always tell me it took about 20 minutes to fall asleep, which made me a little suspicious.

The app includes a chart that tells you what a "normal" resting heart rate is, and what might cause an unusually fast resting heart rate. However, it does not tell you what your heart rate should be after exercise, or why a lower heart rate is better. I did not find it particularly useful to know that I have a normal heart rate.

Enjoyment/Inspiration:

The Pulse was fun to use. I was interested to learn how many steps I walk in a day (about 6,500), and how well I slept the previous night. I was also surprised one day over a weekend to learn that I'd walked and run a total distance of 10 miles without even realizing it.

However, after using the device for about a week, the novelty wore off, leaving me wondering why I might continue to use the device, except to perhaps track my mileage during a run. For example, the Pulse does not have a way to compare your activity with that of your friends — an element of some other fitness trackers that can be motivating.

Conclusion: 14 out of 20 stars

The pros of the Pulse, compared with other fitness trackers, include that it can track your heart rate, be worn on a clip, and provides detailed information about what is considered a "good" or "healthy" amount of exercise and sleep.

The cons of the Pulse are that it has no alarm to wake you up, it's instructions leave you with unanswered questions, and that it does not learn more about you over time.

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Fitbug Orb: Fitness Tracker Review

By Rachael Rettner, Senior Writer

Date: 13 December 2013 Time: 03:28 PM ET

The Orb is a recently released activity tracker from the United Kingdom-based company Fitbug. BUY Fitbug Orb »>
CREDIT: Fitbug

The Orb is a recently released activity tracker from the United Kingdom-based company Fitbug, and it tracks your steps taken, distanced traveled, calories burned and sleep. The name may sound similar to Fitbit, another popular fitness tracker, but that device comes from a California-based company. The main selling point of the Orb is its affordable price: At $49.95, it's about half the price of the Fitbit Flex and $10 cheaper than the Fitbit Zip. But how much do you get for the price? I recently tested the Fitbug to find out.

Design/Comfort □□□□□

There are more ways to wear the Fitbug Orb than for any of the other fitness trackers I've tested. You can put it in the wristband that's included and wear it on your wrist, attach it to your belt/waistband with the clip (like a pedometer) or use

the provided lanyard to wear it around your neck. The company also suggests putting the Orb directly in your pocket, or clipping it to your underwear, if you're so inclined.

I found the Orb comfortable to wear. The wristband has several size settings, so I could adjust the strap to fit snuggly around my wrist. However, the belt clip was a little bulky — I found that when I used it, I could often see the orb bulging out from under my clothes. But still, the clip was useful to wear the device while I was running (and less concerned about my appearance).

The Orb uses a lithium battery, which you have to put in yourself by using a coin to twist open the back of the device. This requires some effort. The battery will save you from having to recharge your device every week or two (as is the case with many other activity trackers), but it will eventually need to be replaced after about four to six months, according to Fitbug. Replacement batteries cost $1.50.

The device tracks sleep, but unlike other trackers — such as the Fitbit Flex and the Jawbone Up — the Orb does not have an alarm.

User-Friendliness: 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

The Fitbug Orb is fairly user-friendly, but it could use some improvement. The device itself is pretty simplistic, with a single button and a light that tells you what mode the device is in. Because there is no screen or interface on the Orb, you'll need to use the Fitbug app (which is available for iPhone and Android) to see your activity information.

The Orb syncs wirelessly with the app when you push down the button once.

The app shows your daily activity — including total steps, aerobic steps, distance traveled and calories burned — as well as your activity history (over the last week), hours of sleep and sleep quality. A monthly calendar lets you go back and review your activity for any point in the past.

The app uses a color code to indicate your progress toward your fitness goals: gray for "keep trying," aqua for "aerobic steps met," brownish-yellow for "total steps met" and magenta if you exceed your activity target. The color-coding system is nice, but the colors don't follow an intuitive sequence (like red, yellow and green, for example), so I had to remind myself continually what each color represented.

The Orb had some trouble tracking my sleep. To put the device into Sleep Mode,

you push the button three times, but when I did this (and saw the confirmation of the light flashing five times, indicating the device was indeed in Sleep Mode), it still seemed to record no data. I thought my device was defective, and the company was quick to send me a new Orb.

I later realized that I might not have exited Sleep Mode correctly after waking up, and this may have been the source of the problem. You need to press the button again when you wake, and hold it down until the light flashes. But should neglecting to do this really allow the device to "lose" all the sleep data from the night before?

Value of Information: □□□□□

The Fitbug excels at providing meaning to the information it tracks. Through your Fitbug account, which you create during setup, you can take a health-assessment questionnaire, which asks about your diet, water and alcohol intake, and stress level, as well as other questions. Fitbug tells you not only whether your habits are in line with recommendations, but also what you can do to improve.

For example, I was very honest and told Fitbug I eat only about two servings of fruit and vegetables daily. Fitbug told me the recommended level is nine to 13 portions, and that eating more fruit and vegetables can reduce my risk of stroke and heart disease. The app also suggested, "Start off by adding at least one extra portion a day to your diet," and provided a link to Fitbug's recipe book.

Fitbug does not give you an activity goal right away; it waits until you've been using the device for a week. Then, it will provide you with a personal target for total steps, aerobic steps and calorie intake. It recommends you try to meet your activity targets five times a week. For sleep, Fitbug recommends you get between 7.5 and 9 hours.

Enjoyment/Inspiration: □□□□□

I found the Fitbug Orb inspiring. When you first sign up, Fitbug will email you each day for a week, explaining the features of the program. After that, Fitbug emails you once a week with a progress report of how you did in terms of reaching your targets. With these progress reports, Fitbug provides you with a reason to keep using your tracker.

Fitbug also uses a smiley-face system to depict your progress, which is a cute feature. When you upload nutrition information to your account, an emoticon

changes from a sad face to a happy face.

I liked that the Orb set my activity goals for me, but if you wanted to set your own goals, you'd be out of luck.

Although you can post your progress to Facebook, the Fitbug app does not have a way to directly compare your activity with that of your friends, as the Fitbit app does.

Conclusion: 14/20 stars

The pros of the Fitbug Orb include its affordable price, the many ways to wear the device and weekly progress reports.

The cons of the Fitbug include its lack of a screen/interface on the device itself, the requirement that you put the battery in yourself and the inability to set your own activity goals.

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Fitbit Zip: Fitness Tracker Review

By Rachael Rettner, Senior writer

Date: 21 March 2014 Time: 03:19 PM ET

The Fitbit Zip BUY the Fitbit Zip»>
CREDIT: Fitbit

The Fitbit Zip is an economical fitness tracker. Priced at $59.95, it is one of the least expensive trackers on the market. (For comparison, the Fitbit One and Withings Pulse are both $99.95.) But does the Zip's lower price mean compromising on features? I tested this tracker out for a week to see how it compares to other devices. Here's a look at how much you get for the bargain price.

Design/Comfort: 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

The Zip is a small, lightweight device (weighing just 8 grams, or 0.28 ounces), and has a smooth, sleek feel. You can easily slip the Zip in your pocket and forget it's there. You can also place the Zip in the provided clip, and wear it like a pedometer on your waistband. For those who like a choice of colors, the device comes in five: black, white, blue, lime green and pink.

The screen is easy to read, but it does not light up, so you won't be able to check your steps in the dark.

The Zip tracks three basic metrics: steps taken, calories burned and distances walked. Unlike its more expensive cousin the Fitbit One, the Zip does not track floors climbed, or hours slept.

You don't have to worry about charging the Zip — it comes with a watch battery — but you will need to replace the battery every four to six months.

User-Friendliness:

The tracker itself does not have any buttons. To see your metrics, you tap the device with your finger. In a world of touch screens and push-buttons, the idea of tapping something takes a little getting used to, but it works fairly well once you get the hang of it.

As with all Fitbit devices, you can sync the Zip wirelessly with your mobile phone to see your data on the accompanying app, or check your stats on the Web through your Fitbit account. The Zip comes with a wireless dongle (a small piece of hardware you plug into a USB port), which allows you to sync it directly to your computer. This feature may be especially useful for people who don't have smartphones.

You can use the app to track how many calories you consume by entering a record of the food you eat through the app, or through your account. If you enter a weight goal, the app will calculate how many calories you can still eat today to stay on track with your goal. This may be a useful feature for people interested in weight loss.

Value of Information:

Fitbit has default goals for physical activity, so you don't have to set them yourself if you're not sure what your goal should be. The default goals are: 10,000 steps a day, 5 miles a day, 30 "active" minutes. However, I could not find an explanation for why Fitbit picked these goals in particular — is this how active you need to be to be healthy? The app didn't make that clear. (In contrast, the Withings Pulse, which is also a pedometer-like fitness tracker, sets a goal of 150 minutes of walking or other activity a week, citing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations for physical activity.)

Enjoyment/Inspiration: □□□□□

Like all Fitbit devices, the Zip tries to motivate you to become more active. On the device itself, you'll see smiley/silly faces that change depending on how active you've been. The app will also prompt you to take some more steps if you are close to your daily goal, which may give you the extra push you need.

You can connect with friends who also have a Fitbit through the app or Fitbit account, and see how your activity compares to theirs, which may also encourage you to increase your step count.

You can earn "badges" that appear on your account when you reach fitness milestones, such as a badge for reaching 50 "lifetime" miles.

However, with no lights or words on the screen itself, the Zip is, well, just a bit boring to look at, which may affect how likely you are to keep using it.

Conclusion: 13 out of 20 stars

If you're looking for an inexpensive, basic tracker that provides a bit of motivation, the Zip is a good one. But the Zip lacks some of the frills you'll see with more expensive devices, including sleep tracking, a lit– up screen, an alarm and a way to track the floors you climb.

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Polar Loop: Fitness Tracker Review

By Jeanna Bryner, Managing Editor

Date: 18 February 2014 Time: 09:25 PM ET

The Polar Loop band is marketed as the activity tracker that makes you move.
Buy the Polar Loop »>
CREDIT: Polar

The Polar Loop band sports all the basic functions of a fitness tracker — it measures sleep time, steps taken, activity time and levels, and calories burned — and it's waterproof, which allowed me to track my activity while swimming. The band, from Finland-based Polar, also displays the time of day, and costs $99.95 on Amazon, which puts it on par in price with Fitbit Flex and the Jawbone Up. And neither of those is waterproof, nor shows the time. I wore the Polar Loop tracker for more than a week, running, swimming, working out on an elliptical machine and exercising with kettlebells, to test out its mojo. Here's what I found.

Design/Comfort: (▢▢▢▢▢)

The Polar Loop is extremely comfortable, though its plastic band is stiffer than the softer silicon material of the Bowflex Boost and Fitbug Orb. This fitness tracker

must be cut to fit your wrist, which at first I thought would be complicated; but using the tiny tool that comes with the Loop to push out the clasp from both sides, and the measuring tape to figure out how much to cut off (also included), sizing was pretty simple, though a little tedious.

There's a video on the Polar website that shows you exactly how to fit your band, though I just looked at the diagram that came with it. (I should note that I first measured my wrist with the tape snugly around it, but was worried I would cut off too much, so I did the cutting in smaller increments. In the end I cut off exactly the number that I first measured.) After it is cut, the band is easy to get on and off by opening its metal clasp.

Once I figured out how to cut the band and reattach the fastener, the tracker felt amazing. Since it's cut to size, I didn't have to worry about it sliding all over, and its relatively soft rubber and light weight made it unobtrusive; sometimes I forgot I was wearing it and sleeping with it was seamless. The only time it did seem to get in the way was when I was doing kettlebells. During a move called the "clean and press," when the kettlebell flips over your hand, the kettlebell would hit my wrist, and the band, which was a little painful.

The only real problem I found with the design was the button used to display the time and activity data. The small button sits low in the band, so it was difficult to push, and I often had to use my fingernail or at least push it a couple times to get it to work.

User friendliness (☐☐☐☐☐)

The Polar Loop band links with software you can download from the Polar website, and with the Polar Loop app for iOS (the band only works with Apple's iPhones). I mostly used the phone app, since it synced up as soon as I opened it, showing me sleep time — which is calculated as the longest stretch of "down time" during a 24-hour period, according to the website — along with number of steps taken, calories burned and, my favorite, the little icons showing the amount of time spent in different activity intensities, from sleep to high intensity.

You can click on the icons showing exercise intensity to get a sense of the types of activities each would represent. For instance, "Low" intensity would include "Standing work, light household chores," while "High" intensity would include "Jogging, running and other intense activities."

When I plugged in the tracker to my computer's USB slot, it updated everything there as well. The software also includes a calendar diary to keep track of all of your data, along with any notes you write.

Having the time of day was also a plus, though I couldn't figure out a way to get the time to always show up as the first item displayed (with the Nike FuelBand, if you "double click" on the button, it displays the time of day).

A downside of the Loop is that in order to view the data on each of your activities, you have to click, wait for the activity to load, and then click again for the next activity, wait, and so on. For instance, if I pushed the button and the display said "Step," if I wanted to see the number of steps I'd taken so far that day, I had to wait. If instead I wanted to see the next variable, such as "Calories," I had to keep clicking until the display read "Calories," and then wait to see the number. If you just click once it shows, for instance, the time and then the display turns off. And since it's tricky pushing the button, all this clicking ended up being a pain, so I usually just synced it with my phone app and looked at all the numbers on there.

Value of information: (□□□□)

The display on the iPhone app was extremely useful to show my overall activity time and levels for the day. The largest part of the app display shows a circle representing a 24-hour period, with the active time shown in shades of blue (the darker blue representing higher intensity activities). Immediately, I became aware of the amount of sitting time that pervaded my work week when I was parked in front of a computer screen, whereas on the weekends I had much longer active times.

The app also showed me whether my workouts were actually providing moderate or intense activity levels, but this actually seemed to be a product of how much I was swinging my arms while exercising. When I was on the elliptical at the gym, and not swinging my arms while "running," the Polar Loop seemed to register that as moderate activity, whereas when I swung my arms instead of holding onto the elliptical sides, the Loop registered that time as intense activity.

The Loop seemed to do a great job at recording my activity time and level when I was swimming and working out with kettlebells. I wore the Loop while swimming about a mile at a time, and it showed most of it as intense activity, which is what it felt like physically to me.

But while the Loop showed me the calories I burned based on my activity, there was no way to input calories eaten during the day.

Also, the sleep time always seemed to be at least an hour lower than my actual time in bed, and on one occasion it showed about four hours of sleep when I actually slept for about eight hours. In addition, there is no breakdown of quality of sleep, so it's not that useful if you want to figure out how to get a better night's sleep.

The FAQs on the Polar Loop website are terrific for answering questions about how things work and for troubleshooting.

Enjoyment/Inspiration: (□□□□□)

I enjoyed wearing this fitness tracker overall, because it gave me the basics without too many details.

The display on the iPhone app was motivational, as it gave me an overall picture of my day and how it stacked up to other days. However, the motivational alerts seemed a little generic and only somewhat motivated me. For instance, if I sat for lengthy periods I would get an inactivity alert that read: "You were sitting for quite a few hours. Try to break it up tomorrow."

Also, I was nearly always well above the daily goal set for me, which was about four hours of low-intensity activity a day. The Loop sets that time based on global recommendations for moderate and vigorous physical activity, your typical day (I sit in front of a computer most of the day), age and gender.

Conclusion: (13 out of 20 stars)

The easy-to-use iPhone app, band comfort, time of day feature and waterproofness of the Polar Loop are big pluses for this fitness tracker. Its drawbacks include the tricky button on the band, and the limitations of the information tracked, which doesn't include sleep quality details, for instance; even so, for the basics the Polar Loop is fantastic.

Buy the Polar Loop »>

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Jawbone UP24: Fitness Tracker Review

By Bahar Gholipour, Staff Writer

Date: 28 February 2014 Time: 04:43 PM ET

I wore the Jawbone UP24 fitness tracker wristband for a week to monitor my exercise and eating habits through the day and the quality of my sleep at night. The UP24 is a flexible band that wraps around your wrist, and is a newer version of the Original Jawbone UP: It connects wirelessly to your iPhone or iPad to automatically sync, which is a must-have feature for a fitness tracker unless you enjoy plugging things together multiple times a day.

But the improvement comes with $20 increase in cost, which makes the UP24 one of the more expensive trackers in the market, at $149. [Best Fitness Tracker Bands]

Though the UP24, like all fitness trackers, certainly has room for improvement, some of its features were definitely among the best compared with other fitness trackers I've seen in this seemingly exploding category of products. Here's a look at how it performed in several categories.

Design/Comfort:

The Jawbone UP24 was a winner for me in terms of how it felt and looked. It was the most comfortable wristband I have tried, and I have tried many. It was easy to put on and take off, and so light that I could hardly feel it on my wrist.

The UP24 is a nice accessory to wear on any occasion — it is not a bulky rubber band that would only match with your jogging sneakers. I found its sleek design stylish, and the textured rubber band and snakelike fold looked sophisticated. The UP24 comes in black and orange, and in three sizes, and I believe it blends better with other accessories you may wear on your wrist, compared with bigger trackers such as the Basis B1 or even the Fitbit Force. [Photos of Jawbone UP24]

The app had an appealing design as well. The colors were pleasing, and the data is presented in a clear way. However, the app only works with iOS devices.

One important shortcoming of the device is that although some water splashing on it wouldn't damage it and you can wear it when taking a shower, it is not fully water-resistant. This means you can't use it while swimming. It is also probably not the tracker you'd want to take with you to the beach next summer.

User-Friendliness: □□□□□

I found learning to use the UP24 fairly straightforward and easy. The first time you use the app, it walks you through simple instructions and asks you basic questions about yourself. The wristband itself has only one button at one of its ends, with which you can put the device in day or night mode.

The UP24 has Bluetooth capability, and automatically connects and syncs with the app, which is a big improvement over the original UP. But unlike some other trackers — for example, the Nike Fuelband and the Basis tracker — the UP24 doesn't include a screen, which means you need to open the app on your phone whenever you want to check your steps.

But once you have the app up, the most important information is right there. You can see how many steps you've taken and how far you are in your goal for exercising today. With one tap, you can enter more detailed sections and see how many calories you've burned, or how long you've been inactive. Similarly, with one tap from the main page, you can enter the food section and log in the lunch you just had.

Value of Information: □□□□□

The UP24 monitors your physical activity during the day, and gives a ballpark estimate of your sleep quality at night.

There's a lot of functionality packed into the app. Besides tracking your daily steps, you can set alerts to remind you to get up from your desk, and you can even tell the app whether you feel great today or just "meh," or if you're totally wiped out.

You can log the food you ate, and the app will calculate your caloric intake. The app also allows you to scan the barcode on food products to input nutrition information. You can also see how many of the calories you've burned just by moving around — the baseline workings of your body.

The device also aims to record how much sleep you get each night, how many times you woke up and how much of your sleep time was spent in "deep" and "light" sleep. But similar to all other personal sleep trackers available in the market, your sleep patterns are interpreted from your movements during sleep, which may not reflect the exact quality and quantity of sleep.

However, this may be the best sleep estimate we can get for now, without sleeping with wires attached to our heads. I also found the UP24 sleep readings similar to what an app on my iPhone placed on my bed recorded. Also, as you look at your data over time, you might get a sense of how your sleep patterns recorded in the app reflect your actual quality of sleep.

The UP24 accumulates all your data over time, allowing you to compare your trends; for example, you can see whether your sleep quality is correlated with what you eat or how much you exercise.

In general, motion trackers that are wristbands are not as accurate in calculating steps and distance covered as basic hip pedometers or GPS distance trackers. In other words, the UP24 may overestimate your steps if you move your arms around.

Enjoyment/Inspiration:

Wearing the UP24 kept me aware of my habits and daily routines. I was motivated to take the stairs instead of the elevator and felt better about my long walks to the subway station. Logging my gym activity into the UP24 gave me satisfaction of marking down my accomplishment.

When looking at my "trends," I saw a giant drop in my activity over the weekend,

which felt like a revelation. I always knew I didn't move as much over the weekends, but actually seeing the big hole in my upward movement trend has motivated me to think of a weekend activity for the coming weeks.

Social features in the UP24 app allow you to share your milestones with friends on Facebook and Twitter, which can be quite inspirational.

One of my favorite sports is swimming, but the recent cold weather has put me off. I believe if the Up24 was water-resistant, it would have inspired me to brave the cold and hit the pool.

Conclusion: 13 out of 20 stars

The pros of the Jawbone UP24, compared with other fitness trackers, are that it provides useful data on several aspects of your daily routine, it's easy to work, and it allows you to scan food barcodes. Depending on your style, you might find the UP24 among the most fashionable of the other tracker wristbands.

For those who like to check their information without having to access their phone, the UP24 not having a screen would be one of its drawbacks. In addition, frequent swimmers and people who live or work near water may want to look for a water-resistant tracker like Misfit Shine.

BUY the Jawbone UP24 Activity Tracker »>

Email Bahar Gholipour *or follow her @alterwired. Follow us @LiveScience, Facebook & Google+. Original article on Live Science.*

Jawbone Up: Fitness Tracker Review

By Clara Moskowitz, LiveScience Senior Writer

Date: 02 October 2013 Time: 12:52 AM ET

BUY the Jawbone Up »>

After a week of wearing the Jawbone Up, I was pretty impressed with this nifty device. It told me how well I'd slept, how many steps I'd taken, how far I'd walked, how many calories I'd burned — all within a colorful and smartly designed app. Though the Up has some downsides, the device can definitely make a difference in how you approach your fitness. Here's a look at how it performed in several categories:

Design/Comfort: □□□□□

The Jawbone Up is a soft rubber wristband that resembles a mini coil, like a snake. I've seen the Up called the most fashionable of the wearable fitness trackers, but to me it was a bit bulky, and the black model I had didn't exactly fit with my "style." I found it somewhat more annoying to wear than some of the lighter, flatter fitness wristbands, like the Fitbit Flex. However, I did get used to it fairly quickly and overall it wasn't a burden.

Unlike some other trackers, the Up doesn't have Bluetooth, so to sync the wristband with its app, you have to plug the end of the band into your phone. This was sometimes annoying, and meant I didn't check my stats quite as often as I did with trackers that synced automatically via Bluetooth.

But I will give the Up bonus points for the design of its app, which of all the activity tracker apps I tried, was the most pleasing and fun to use. The colors and display of the data were clear and engaging, and the app was super-easy to learn without reading instructions. [Top Fitness Gadgets for 2013]

User-Friendliness: 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

I don't have a single complaint about learning to use the Jawbone Up. I read only the bare minimum of the instructions, and was largely able to figure out everything by downloading the app, plugging in the Up, and exploring.

There's a lot of functionality packed into the app, and it's pretty easy to find the information you want, from how to track daily steps to more complicated tasks like setting alerts to remind you to get up from your desk, and comparing trends over time, such as how your sleep correlates with what you eat or how much you exercise.

However, telling the app what I ate was sometimes a chore, and although it has a large library of common foods, it didn't always recognize the foods I searched for. But the app does allow users to add foods, as well as scan the barcodes of some foods to automatically input their nutrition information.

Value of Information: 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

The Jawbone Up collects a good amount of data about your fitness, and presents it in a clear way designed to help you draw conclusions and change your habits. It was fascinating to see how many miles I actually covered doing errands and walking to the subway, and even more revealing to see how my daily level of activity correlated with other data points, such as how much I ate or how well I slept.

In general, motion trackers including the Up aren't as accurate in calculating steps and distance covered as basic hip pedometers, or GPS distance trackers. If you wave your arms around while sitting still, the Up will still think you're walking. Meanwhile, if you're walking and carrying something heavy, but keeping

your wrist extremely steady, you might not get points for those steps.

Still, the Up's readouts were a good basic measurement, and were pretty self-consistent over time, so they worked for looking at trends from day to day or week to week.

I found the Up's sleep readings slightly more accurate and useful than the Fitbit Flex's, though it seems all activity trackers can misinterpret stillness for sleep.

The Jawbone Up gets extra points for giving fun daily health tips, and offering more information overall to help you interpret your own fitness data. It also allows you to input your mood and see how this correlates with exercise, diet and sleep. [How Counties Rank in Obesity and Physical Fitness Rates (Infographic)]

Enjoyment/Inspiration: □□□□

Some days I was a lot more engaged with the Jawbone Up than others.

Because you have to plug the device into your phone to see your latest data, there's more of a barrier to opening the app frequently to check your progress. Of course, this syncing progress goes quickly, so I still plugged it in and checked my stats multiple times a day. But when I was really busy, I tended to ignore my Up, and it had less of an effect on my life.

On the other hand, I found the data it provided to be richer and more illuminating than some other devices, so in that sense, it did have an advantage in helping me adjust my behavior for better health. Ultimately, of course, how much I changed, and how much I got out of the Jawbone Up depended on how much energy and attention I put into it.

Conclusion: 13 out of 20 stars

The pros of the Jawbone Up, compared with other fitness trackers, are that it provides rich and useful data, it's easy to find the information you're looking for in the app, and it allows you to scan food barcodes to input nutrition information.

The cons of the Up include that you have to physically plug the device into your phone to sync it with the app, and that it's a bit bulky.

BUY the Jawbone Up »

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Nike+ FuelBand SE: Fitness Tracker Review

By Rachael Rettner, Senior Writer

Date: 15 April 2014 Time: 05:51 PM ET

BUY the Nike Fuelband SE »>
CREDIT: Nike, Inc.

The FuelBand SE is an activity tracker from the sports giant Nike that allows you to track your activity and compare it with others in the Nike+ community. The SE is an update to the original version of the FuelBand, and includes a few new features. Here's what I found after a week of testing the device.

Design/Comfort:

The SE has the same design as the original FuelBand — the wristband is a single, solid object that is taken on and off with a clasp, but is not adjustable. Unlike the original — which came only in black, white or clear — the SE is mainly black, but has several options for the small color accents on the band. Users can choose from six colors: gold, silver, black, yellow, red and magenta.

It was a good move to make the SE mostly black, rather than white or clear, as this makes the screen (which has white lights) easier to read.

The SE comes with two extensions (called links) that can be added or removed to make the band a smidgen (8 or 16 millimeters) bigger or smaller, if you need a better fit. Still, the lack of a truly adjustable strap meant that the band wobbled around a bit on my wrist. I also hurt myself a few times when I accidentally pinched my skin in the clasps, so you'll have to be careful not to do this.

User-Friendliness:

A short video on the Nike setup website explains how to get started using the SE. I found it to be a helpful way to familiarize myself with the device.

You'll need to install the Nike+ Connect software on your computer, and create a Nike+ account before you can start using the device. Once the band is connected to your computer, you can set a daily activity goal. Nike measures your activity levels in "Fuel points", which are based on your movement and calculated the same way for everyone, the company says.

You can view some information about your activity on the device itself. A screen on the SE displays your Fuel points, "hours won" (the number of hours in which you were active for at least five minutes) and the time. There's also an option to view your step count and calories burned on the screen. You press a single button to toggle through your stats.

A row of colored lights underneath the main screen provides a quick way to see your daily progress; they light up from red to green as you get closer to your Fuel point goal.

A new feature of the SE, compared to the original, is the ability to create "sessions," which let you track the Fuel points you earn during a specific activity, like an afternoon run, as well as the duration of the activity. The SE also tracks your "FPM" during a session, but does not explain what this abbreviation means. I eventually discovered that it stands for "Fuel points per minute".

The device syncs wirelessly with the Nike+ FuelBand app, but if you want to sync it with your computer, you have to connect it directly through the provided USB cable.

I experienced one problem with connectivity while using the SE: After initially connecting the device to my computer, I was not able to transfer the data from

the device to my Nike+ Account. An error message told me that there was an "Error returned from Nike+". I had to reset the device, which fixed the connection, but I lost the data I had not uploaded.

Value of Information: □□□□□

Nike Fuel points are a nice way to compare your day's activity with other people's. But Nike does not explain how the points are calculated (other than to say that more movement equals more points), so they have little meaning outside the Nike+ world.

Nike also says it recently updated its algorithm to measure activity more accurately — providing more Fuel points for high-intensity activities, like running, and fewer points for low-intensity activities, like typing at your desk.

The default daily goal is 2,000 Fuel points a day, but it's up to users to decide how much activity they should aim for, and Nike does not explain how much activity you need to "be healthy." (For comparison, the Withings Pulse tells users that the World Health Organization recommends 150 minutes of activity per week.). I found that, for me, 5,000 steps were roughly equal to 1,000 Fuel points.

Although you can track the duration of your sleep by creating a session for it, the SE does not provide sleep analysis. If you're looking for more information about your sleep —like an estimate of how many times you woke up —you'd have to go with another device.

Enjoyment/Inspiration: □□□□□

Like the original FuelBand, the SE has a bunch of features intended to motivate you to get active. A new feature is the ability to set reminders during the day to prompt you to move. (To remind you, the screen will flash "GO" and your name, as well as a line of lights.) However, I didn't always look at the screen — especially if I was sitting down and working, so I sometimes missed these reminders.

The "hours won" feature did make me realize how little I moved during the day. I typically won just one or two hours, meaning that, although I had some spurts of activity, I was mostly sedentary.

Your Nike+ account prompts you to connect with friends so you can compare activity, which may be fun if you have a competitive streak.

You'll also get notifications if you improve, such as, "You had a record-breaking Thursday."

Conclusion: 12 out of 20 stars

The pros of the SE include an easy-to-read screen, the ability to compare your activity with that of other people and the ability to set reminders to move.

The cons of the SE include the lack of sleep analysis, the lack of an adjustable strap and the inability to sync wirelessly with a computer.

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Nike FuelBand: Fitness Tracker Review

By Rachael Rettner, Senior Writer

Date: 02 October 2013 Time: 01:01 AM ET

BUY the Nike Fuelband »>

The Nike FuelBand is an activity tracker that aims to get you moving, and allows you to compare your activity with others in the Nike+ community. As part of an experiment to become more familiar with activity trackers, I tried out the device to see how easy it was to use, and whether it provided meaningful health information and really inspired me to improve my health.

Design/Comfort:

The FuelBand is a single, solid object, so unlike a typical wristwatch, there's no adjustable strap. (In this manner, it is similar to the Jawbone Up, another activity tracker wristband.) The band is taken on and off with a clasp.

But if you bought a size that's slightly too big or small, don't worry. The FuelBand comes with two extensions (called links) that can be added or removed to make the band a smidgen (8 or 16 millimeters) bigger or smaller. I thought this was a clever trick that would save you from having to order a new device if you

happened to misjudge your size.

Still, the lack of a truly adjustable strap meant that the band did not fit snugly on my wrist. And if you're not used to wearing wristbands, you might find such a device a little bothersome (as I did).

The device comes in several styles; my version was slightly transparent (so you could see the interior of the device) with no rubber covering. The lack of rubber covering made the device slightly uncomfortable to wear. And the transparent covering made the screen (which has white lights) a little hard to read in daylight. The other version with a black, rubber covering gives the screen slightly more contrast and makes it easier to read.

User-Friendliness: 　　　

The Nike FuelBand is intuitive and user-friendly. A short video on the Nike setup website explains how to get started using the device, which is a much easier way to familiarize yourself with the device than reading a user manual.

Once you install the Nike+ Connect software on your computer and create a Nike+ account, you can set a daily goal for daily "NikeFuel points," the brand's way of measuring physical activity. Fuel points (which are based on movement) are calculated the same way for everyone, so you can compare your daily activity with others.

The screen on the FuelBand lets you check your progress throughout the day without needing to plug the device into your computer or sync to your phone to see your data. Pressing the button next to the screen once shows you Fuel points, and pressing it subsequent times shows you calories burned, steps taken and the actual time of day.

For those who want to know how they're doing "right now," the screen interface is an attractive feature. (For comparison, the Jawbone Up does not have an interface, and users must plug the wristband into their phone in order to see their activity levels.)

On the FuelBand, a row of colored lights underneath the main screen gives you a visual summary of your daily progress, lighting up from red to green as you get closer to your goal of taking a certain number of steps.

Plugging the device into your computer and logging into your account gives you more detailed information, including the distance you've traveled and total

activity time, as well as how your daily activity compares with your activity in previous days, and how it compares with the average person in the Nike+ community.

Value of Information: 🔲🔲🔲🔲

NikeFuel points are a nice way to compare your day's activity with other people's, but Nike does not explain how they are calculated (besides to say that more movement equals more points), and so they have little meaning outside the Nike+ world.

The default setting is 2,000 Fuel points for a normal day, 3,000 for an active day, and 5,000 for a high-energy day. But Nike does not tell you how much activity you need to "be healthy." This may leave you wondering exactly what the goal should be: Can you get by with a Fuel point goal lower than the average, and still improve your health? (For comparison, the Withings Pulse tells users that the World Health Organization recommends 150 minutes of activity per week.)

It does require a fair bit of activity to reach 2,000 Fuel points. (On my first day of using the device, about 5,000 steps got me only halfway there.)

The FuelBand has an accelerometer to track movement, and so there are ways to "trick" the device. For instance, raising your arms above your head 10 times will give you the same number of Fuel points as doing 10 jumping jacks. Also, the device does not award you for physical activity in which your wrist remains still, as it would during a pushup. In contrast, you'll a get a small number of points for driving a car.

The device does not track sleep, so if you're interested in this measurement, you might be better off with a device that does (such as the Fitbit Flex, Up, or Pulse).

The Fuelband also has a clock, which is something the other activity trackers lack. However, the clock does not automatically change when you move into a different time zone.

Enjoyment/Inspiration: 🔲🔲🔲🔲

There's no denying, the FuelBand was designed to motivate you to move. The device screen starts up with a "GO!" to get you moving, and displays a "GOAL" when you've reached you're your daily goal.

Completing a new record will send a message to your Nike+ account, where you

can watch a cute animation of NikeFuel character performing a celebratory dance. And notifications on your account will pop up, asking you to commit to completing a new goal, or "raise the bar" on your current activity.

The app can also track how many times a week you meet a goal, providing even more motivation to keep up the good work.

Conclusion: 12 out of 20 stars

The main pros of the Nike Fuelband include that it has a clock, allows you to compare your activity with that of other people and displays your daily progress directly on the device.

Cons of the Fuelband include its inability to measure some types of exercise, and its lack of a sleep tracker.

BUY the Nike Fuelband »>

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Misfit Shine: Fitness Tracker Review

By Tia Ghose, Staff Writer

Date: 13 January 2014 Time: 05:00 PM ET

BUY Misfit Shine Activity Monitor »>
CREDIT: Misfit Wearables

I wore the Misfit Shine for a week, to test how well it performs within the exploding marketplace of fitness trackers — devices that record and document users' steps, calories and sleep. The Shine stands out from other trackers because it can be worn in the water, and has a long battery life. Its sleek design — along with the option to wear it as a wristband, belt clip or necklace — make it a more fashionable alternative to other trackers. With a price of $119.95, it's a midline investment — about as expensive as the Fitbit Force ($129.95) but considerably cheaper than the B1 Basis ($169.99). Here's how the Shine performed.

Design/Comfort

The Shine is a matte, aluminum disc as big as a quarter. The disc can be slipped into a simple wristband, a magnetic device that clips onto clothes or even as a necklace. I found the wrist attachment to be sturdy, easy-to-clean and extremely

1

comfortable. The magnetic clip was sturdy and seemed unlikely to fall off.

To sync the Shine with its app on your smartphone, the directions say you need to tap the Shine against the phone. However, I noticed it often synced automatically when my phone was simply near my wrist. Being able to use it in the pool was impressive, and its water-friendliness meant it was also easier to keep clean after a sweaty workout.

User-friendliness 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

The Shine's smartphone app was bare-bones, and not very intuitive to use. One icon, which looked like an image of the globe, doesn't do anything. And the app has no labeled menu to display the key metrics, such as miles walked or calories burned. Instead, I had to swipe across the screen to get that information. Additionally, the Shine lacks a Web app, so using the app on a smartphone is the only option.

You can check your progress without opening the app — when you tap Shine's face, a different number of times, blinking lights flicker on to show you the time of day, your progress toward daily goals and the start of a new activity. Reading these lights is almost like learning a new code — I often had to reread the FAQs on the Misfit website to interpret them. More problematic, the Shine had trouble correctly sensing my taps, which meant a fairly vigorous swim was tracked as a "kinda active" walking session.

Shine takes a standard watch battery that the company says can run for four months without needing to be recharged. When I got mine, the battery was dead, despite having been inserted less than four months beforehand. Still, even a somewhat shorter battery life is miles ahead of other fitness trackers that need to be recharged daily or weekly.

Value of Information 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

The Shine provides basic data, but it lacks detail. For instance, it doesn't allow users to track food or calorie consumption, or to manually tweak incorrectly labeled data. Like the Nike FuelBand, the Shine lets users earn points, and tracks the total points earned, but the app doesn't explain how those points correspond to a healthy lifestyle.

The sensors autodetect individual workout sessions, creating discrete icons with points earned for "pretty active" or "kinda active" workout sessions. But those

vague terms are not explained in the app or on the website, and you can't translate the points from an individual workout into miles or calories burned.

Like many other trackers, the Shine seems to mistake sitting for sleep. In order to get an accurate measure of your sleep, you have to label the activity of "sleep" just before bedtime and make sure to tap the device three times. Shine also overestimated the distances I walked — a problem that plagues many activity trackers.

The device also doesn't track elevation changes, as trackers such as the FitBit Force do. Given the hills in San Francisco, it would have been nice to get credit for a few of those climbs.

Enjoyment/Inspiration

Wearing the Shine did motivate me to break out a swimsuit in the winter, but the lack of granular data made it less inspiring for actually changing my routine. Other trackers offer badges or motivational messages to get people moving, and although the Shine doesn't, I found I didn't miss this aspect. Not having to plug in the device at all was motivation enough to wear it every day, and having it sync so easily with the phone led me to check it fairly frequently.

Conclusion: 11 out of 20 stars

The Shine's sleek, comfortable design; its long battery life; and its water-friendliness will make it a tempting option for people who swim regularly or value fashion. But stats lovers and die-hard fitness junkies may find the app too confusing and the data it provides too sparse to be motivational.

BUY the Misfit Shine Activity Monitor »>

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Bowflex Boost: Fitness Tracker Review

Rachael Rettner, Senior Writer

Date: 22 October 2013 Time: 11:18 AM ET

BUY Bowflex Boost »>
CREDIT: Laptopmag.com

The maker of Bowflex fitness equipment, Nautilus, recently launched an activity tracker called Bowflex Boost. At $49.95, it's one of the least expensive activity trackers on the market (For comparison, the Jawbone Up will cost you $129.99, and the Fitbit Flex goes for $99.95).

But how well does the Boost perform compared to other, more pricey trackers? I tried it out for a few days to see.

Design/Comfort: □□□□□

The Boost excels in comfort. Made from silicone material, the wristband is flexible, and is designed to coil around the wrist before it is snapped into place with a plastic clasp.

My favorite thing about the Boost has to be the 14 size settings, which allow you

to adjust the band so that it fits snuggly around your wrist. Although a simple feature, you'd be surprised at how much less fun a fitness trackeris to wear if it doesn't fit right. I have small wrists, and the Boost fit me much better than some other wristband fitness trackers, such as the Nike FuelBand, which can be only minimally adjusted, and Jawbone Up, which cannot be adjusted at all.

The Boost has just one button on the top of the device, which you press to see your progress — a red, yellow or green light shines to indicates how far you are toward reaching your activity goal for the day — to put the device in sleep mode, or to wirelessly sync the device with your phone.

I found this button somewhat hard to operate. The button needs to be held for three seconds to put into sleep mode, and five seconds to sync. It sometimes took me several tries to get the device into sleep mode, or to sync, even though I was pushing the button down quit firmly. Instead of syncing, the light on the device would simply turn off, and I would have to start over.

User-Friendliness: 🔲🔲🔲🔲🔲

The device is simple enough to use. The red, yellow, green lighting system gives you a quick snapshot of your daily activity progress. However, there is no screen on the wristband, so users must look at the app to know exactly how many steps they've taken or calories burned. For people interested in knowing exactly how they're doing "right now," an activity tracker with a screen might be a better fit. [Top Fitness Gadgets for 2013]

To see your data, you have to download the Boost app, which is currently available only for the iPhone. When you launch the app for the first time, a graphic explains how to use the device, and the meaning of Boost's red/yellow/green lights. (Red means you've reached 0–50 percent of your goal, yellow 51–99 percent and green 100 percent).

Boost tracks the steps you've taken, the calories you've burned and the distance walked. It also tracks your sleep time, and how long it takes you to fall asleep. With the app launched, you simply swipe the screen to switch between viewing your activity and sleep.

Over time, the Boost tracks your weekly, monthly and yearly activity, and can display it in a graph. However, it doesn't store the daily data — after a day has passed, there's no way for you to view how many steps you took on that day, how

many calories you burned, and your distance traveled.

The Boost app shows users their activity and sleep. Above, two separate iPhone screen captures.

Value of Information: ⬜⬜⬜⬜

The default settings for Boost's activity goals are 10,000 steps, 500 calories and three miles, although you can adjust these goals if you so choose.

However, the device does not tell you how much activity you need to "be healthy," or how much sleep you need, and does not provide tips to boost your activity or help you get more shuteye. In other words, there's very little "hand-holding" with the Boost.

The device tracks your activity, but it's up to you to figure out how to improve it. (For comparison, the Withings Pulse tells users that the World Health Organization recommends 150 minutes of activity per week, and that most adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep.)

The Boost's light does not shine green until you've reached all three of your goals, for steps, calories and miles. So if you've walked 15,000 steps, but burned only 300 calories, the light remains yellow. This method may help users focus on all three metrics, rather than just one.

A small criticism is that the activity graphs on the app — which show your daily, weekly, monthly or yearly activity — have a Y axis labeled simply as "%." Which begs the question, percent of what?
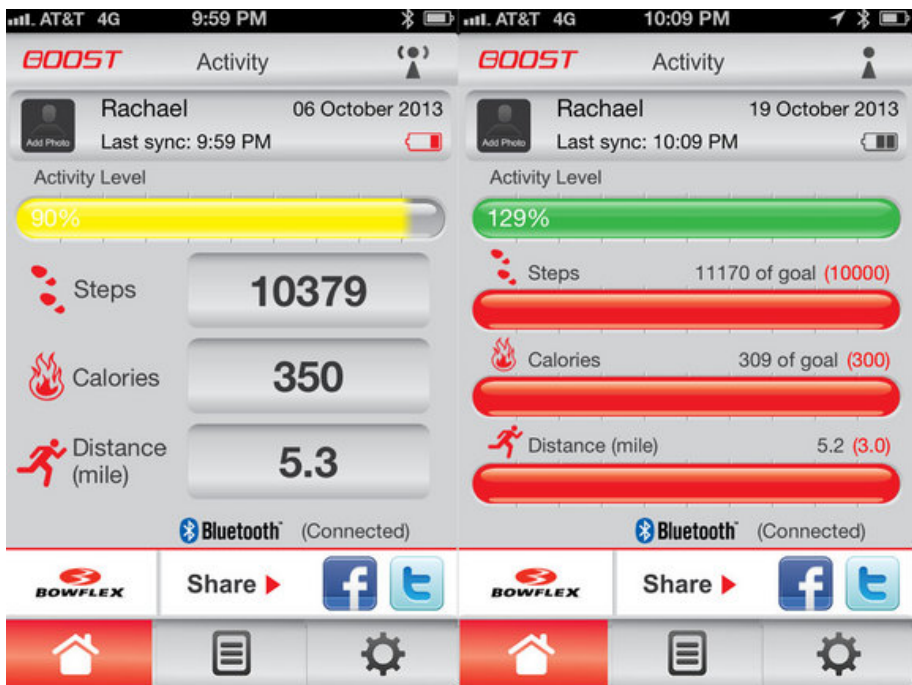
On the Boost app, the activity bar does not fill with green (indicating you've reached 100 percent of your activity goal) until you've reached all three of your goals, for steps, calories and miles
Credit: Rachael Rettner

Enjoyment/Inspiration: 🔲🔲🔲🔲

The Boost tracks your activity, but I can't say it was very inspiring. It does not prompt you to get moving when you have a sedentary day, nor praise you when

you meet your goal.

The app also does not allow you to compare your daily activity with others, however, you can share your activity to Facebook and Twitter. But if you're looking for a no-frills device, and you simply need to see your activity numbers for a little motivation, the Boost might be for you.

Conclusion: 10 out of 20 stars

The pros of the Boost include its affordable price, adjustable strap and ability to view a month's or year's worth of data on a single graph.

The cons of the Boost are a lack of a screen on the wristband, no tips for how to improve physical activity or sleep, and no way to look up exactly how many steps you took after a day has passed.

BUY Bowflex Boost »>

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